

DR. WILLIAM LOVE - March 2015

Beyond Retirement, Dr. Love Continues to Teach and to Fight for What's Right

Bill Love pauses when asked how many students he's taught over his 42 years teaching in the Peralta Community College District, as if it's the first time he's ever considered it. "Well...I guess it would be about 15,000 to 18,000," he finally says with a slight smile.



Dr. Love may not remember all of his past students, but most of them are certain to remember him and his influence on their lives. A truly dedicated instructor, at age 75, he's still teaching after his retirement 12 years ago.

What keeps him in the classroom? "I'm good at what I do. I can teach, I'm fair, I'm supportive, and as one student told me, 'you're not boring,'" says Dr. Love. "I've even had students come back when the class is over to finish a last chapter."

After graduating from Merritt himself, Dr. Love went on to major in psychology which he then taught at the College of Alameda before moving to Merritt. Since the late '70s, he has taught in the Community Social Services Program which has since become one of the college's most popular programs and "fifth largest FTE generator." Those numbers reflect both a great instructor and an in-demand program designed to prepare students for entry-level positions in counseling substance abuse clients. In fact, many of the students in Dr. Love's classes come from troubled backgrounds themselves.

"We have 75% ex-offenders and substance abusers in the program who are trying to improve their lives," says Dr. Love. "After they graduate, many get fulfilling jobs, and some go on to get their B.As and some master's degrees. We've even had several Chancellor's Trophy winners."

Beyond the classroom, he is well known by his fellow faculty members and administrators by his presence in college meetings where he often questions decisions, always striving to assure equality for all students (he spent eight non-teaching years

during the '80s as the District's affirmative action officer). But what many may not know is that his assertiveness is inherited.

"I come from a family of community activists," says Dr. Love. "All of them were involved in integration and making sure the city council paid attention. In the early '60s my mother was a leader in saving West Oakland from being razed, my father was Oakland's first black football coach, and everyone knew of my grandparents contributions. As I got older, I realized that the tables are definitely not level, and I was going to do something about it."

Among his many accomplishments, Love was the driving force behind the controversial move of the Cypress Expressway after the '89 earthquake.

His contributions were recently recognized by the City of Oakland during Black History Month, when he was among several African-Americans honored for making the city a better place to live. His award was presented to him by City Council member (and former Peralta trustee) Abel Guillen (pictured).

"Dr. Love has been a steadfast community leader in Oakland for more than an 40 years, and we have all benefited from his service," said Guillen in a recent phone call, "He is one of those unsung heroes that work deserves the utmost respect and recognition."

—*Susan May*